

For a Synodal Church

Communion - Participation - Mission

The following is the Homily given by Bishop Lawrence Nicasio at the 8:30 a.m. opening Synodality Mass at Holy Redeemer Cathedral in Belize City on Sunday, October 17, 2021.



FIRST YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THIS: THERE IS NO PROPHECY CONTAINED IN SCRIPTURE WHICH IS A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION. PROPHECY HAS NEVER BEEN PUT FORWARD BY MAN'S WILLING IT. IT IS RATHER THAT MEN IMPELLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT HAVE SPOKEN UNDER GOD'S INFLUENCE. (2 Peter 1:20)

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, impelled by the Holy Spirit has spoken under God's influence. This means that the Holy Father did not just get up one morning and ask the entire Roman Catholic Church to join him on a Synodal Journey. The Holy Father has journeyed with this Church for years and he believes that we, this Church, can do more to be, to live who we truly are. It is easy, as Scripture says, to see the splinter in our brother's and sister's eye, but we fail to see, or we avoid seeing the log/beam in our own eye.

The Holy Father believes that we are truly Church when we have the courage, when we are

unafraid to put others first - that life of humility, washing each other's feet, no matter where those feet have trod; no matter how dirty those feet are.

In the past, we have journeyed with a Church that focused much on the image of the priest/ bishop. Listen to us speak: Is he a hard worker? Or is he lazy? Is he classy? Is he very intelligent? Well qualified? Is he handsome? Does he preach well? Is he a dynamic speaker? Does he mix well with people (a social butterfly?) Does he make people laugh? Is his Mass very lively and applicable to today's living?

We have journeyed with a Church whereby the celebration and the multiplication of Masses are of utmost importance to the Church; that receiving communion every Sunday is what speaks volume of our fidelity to Jesus who founded this Church.

Please be mindful that there are still many members of this Church, in parts of the world, who are not privileged to a Mass every day or every Sunday. Prior to the Covid pandemic these Catholics got one Mass a year, and these Roman Catholics continue to be Catholics; they continue to live life as a true Church, as true followers of Christ, not trying to impress anyone and are very happy knowing, loving, and serving the Lord God of their people.

We now know what it is like and what it looks like being a Church during a pandemic. We now

know what a Church feels like and looks like that is so distant from its own reality and surroundings, distant from the digital world, that world that daily knocks at its door.

We have a journey to continue! We cannot say that the Roman Catholic Church has arrived at its destination here in Belize or in the world. The empty convents, the lack of priests, the priests' crisis; the desire for some priests to have a cushy job, a nice stipend, a good vehicle and a day off; the sexual abuse cases of priests against minors and vulnerable persons must wake up a Church on a journey of HOPE, on a journey that is not the same old, same old comfort zone; on a journey that is exciting and full of real meaning/purpose; a journey that incorporates communion, participation and mission. We are not people in Belize who are unfamiliar to journeys. We journey everywhere to different places in Belize and different places in the world. Some of us announce our journeys, while others prefer to keep their journeys a secret.

Let us not forget too our stories that have given our lives meaning and purpose. The journeys our ancestors made for us to be here. The journeys Catholic Christians made for us to continue to be a Church. Our names tell of the successful journeys that those who have gone before us made to give us a religion, a culture and a name. We are a Roman Catholic Church with a Maya, Garifuna, Creole, Mestizo, East Indian, Chinese, Taiwanese face. We are a Roman Catholic Church with a Belizean flavor. We are a Roman Catholic Church that is oozing with the odor of Belizean sheep. We who know our story know that the journey is just beginning with each day's blessings and challenges. Our stories of successful journeys point us to communion, participation and mission. Our journey today, and for the next six months, will be successful if it is made together. Selfishness/ journeying alone is not an ingredient for successful journeys.

We journey as we are - sinners on a journey. He who is the just Judge watches and accompanies us. Remember He said it: "I came for sinners and not for the righteous." Let us acknowledge ourselves as loving, happy sinners who, with each day, want to be better people, living in a better common home created for all. Let us all together be on this journey, full of COURAGE, (NOT FEAR), full of HOPE, knowing that wherever the mission takes us, He will be there waiting for us.

WITH THESE HUMBLE WORDS, I DECLARE OUR SYNODAL JOURNEY HERE IN OUR DIOCESE OF BELIZE CITY AND BELMOPNAN, OPEN!